

# *Reliant Kitten Register*



**NEWSLETTER – TWENTY-FIVE**

*November/December 1998*



The Register caters for all the under 1 litre Reliant 4-wheeled vehicles plus all of their derivatives – Rebels, Foxes, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, Jimps, Asquiths and all other specials including the Liege.....

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## INDEX

Page 0	Front cover
Page 1	Index
Page 2	The Registrar speaks
Page 3	And continues to speak
Page 4	Brian's diary (Rebel round up)
Page 5	Continued
Page 6	Foxes' Den
Page 7	Readers Letters
Page 8	Continued
Page 9	More from our readers
Page 10	It must be Christmas!
Page 11	Some thoughts from the Registrar
Page 12	Sales & Wants
Page 13	Notes
Page 14	Your Cars
Page 15	Advert – And three wise men?

We are indebted to the following individuals who both give and receive information on the following subjects on our behalf.

**Rebel Alternative Parts contact:**- Contact Brian

**Kitten Alternative Parts contact:**- Contact Brian

**Fox Alternative Parts contact:**- Contact Brian

**Mutual Aid Spares Scheme** – Contact Brian

The Register has a page on the internet at <http://www.uk-classic-cars.com/kitten.htm>

**Our front cover this time is graced by one of those very brisk Liege's (amongst the options list often taken up by owners is a supercharger! This on a vehicle which weighs only about two thirds of what a Kitten does! Must go well – I wonder if there is room in the Kitten for the supercharger?) This example belongs to Howard Blackwell from Mount Sorrel in Leicestershire, who is one of an ever increasing number of Liege owners whom I am happy to see among our subscribers. (Even though the creation of a Liege means the destruction of a Kitten or Fox!)**

Welcome to our Christmas edition, 25 already – who would have thought...

Anyway, seasons greetings to you and yours. Owing to the ever increasing backlog of paperwork on my desk, I might just treat you to an extra couple of A4 sides in this edition.

Leap forward in time now to the 19<sup>th</sup> of October and I have just discovered that that glutton for punishment to whom we all owe so much these days, John Pearce, tells me that he is again prepared to do us some colour pictures inside the back cover – one less page for me to type – thank you John.

We may well have another page or three on the internet in the near future, providing I agree to maintain a page of adverts there for the selling of our fine cars – delegation must be the thing here as I am not on the net, just using this as a note pad to jog my memory.

Leap forward in time again, 1<sup>st</sup> of November now and I have just had to issue some non-standard letters of welcome to our recent subscribers. October saw the highest number of new subscribers for some time, 18 of you in fact and I have once again run out of back numbers of the magazine, sorry Alan (he is constantly frustrated by my not getting him to do enough in the first place!) having run out of money towards the end of last year, I was trying to be prudent. Happily the new £10 subscription has left us with a slight surplus this year (due also to a great extent to John Pearce's generous contribution of our front covers) which will be used to produce the supplement which I intend to put out with this edition. Yes I will get some more magazines in the initial run in future (please, please send in your renewals soon, so that I don't panic when I get the bigger batch of edition 26 in and think I've overdone it!!)

One thing I have done reasonably correctly so far I think is not to keep publishing the Register details in every other magazine. We did list them a couple of times in the early days and I seem to remember saying that I would not continue to take up an ever increasing amount of space in the magazine that way in the future. I would prefer to publish a year book or some such at some point in the future....

Then Connie and Keith Bush added their Fox Custom to the Register in September and, don't ask me why, it occurred to me that I did not know exactly how many of each type of Reliant we had on the Register. Thanks to Brian Millar's sterling work on our behalf, I was easily able to print off a report in model order, which reminds me, Brian (Millar) if I don't talk to you about it before, can I please have a menu option to select details on a particular model, rather than have to print the lot?

Anyway the resultant report, quite apart from being 13 pages long, and that is in a font a lot smaller than the one you're reading this in, not only highlighted all the incomplete entries (another 18 letters to write to those individuals whose addresses I have but no car details at all – more work!) but also records where I have missing information, whether it be a chassis number, date of first registration or whatever. The report brought to light the following information:-

1 x Ant; 1 x Bond Bug;            2 x Ciphers; 49 x Foxes; 7 x Jimps; 2 x Specials; 317 x Kittens; 3 x Lieges; 53 x Rebels; 2 x Rialto's; 1 x Salamander; 1 x Scimitar; 3 x Tempests. – And nary a Partridge in a Pear Tree in sight!

This of course includes all known vehicles, several of which belong to people who are not subscribers and equally many subscribers have more than one car. It also excludes the 15 or so associate members whose support we continue to enjoy and of course completely ignores the fact that some of the cars are known to have been scrapped or broken up.

It was taken in September 1998 and then we had the largest number of new subscribers in October so it is out of date already. The list you should find enclosed with this magazine will have a date at the top of the first page which will be the date, sometime in November I think, when that snapshot of our records was taken.

Yes it is possible to break that down into how many saloons, estates, vans what have you but I've got to keep something back for the year book (will I live to regret mentioning a yearbook I wonder?).

I am aware that many if not most one make clubs print new member details in their magazines and that I don't. If you feel that you would like to see such information I will consider it but to be honest I find it simplest to do the magazine the way you have seen it in the past and to have to jump between different bits of software (and please don't tell me how easy this should be) I will not easily be parted from my faithful existing software, something to do with old dogs and new tricks. But if enough of you feel strongly I will consider change....

Robert Spare of P.F.Spare Insurance brokers is keen to help us with our insurance quotes. He tells me that if you ring them on 01530 270574 and mention our agreement, they will take a few brief details then call you back (to save your telephone bill) while they prepare a quote. Lyn is the girl to ask for and while the company have been good enough to subscribe to the Register as associate members and so deserve the same care and consideration as any of the flock, I have to say that their premium was no better than I am paying at the moment, but these things vary greatly from area to area. If they are paying for the call, what have you got to lose?

I am well aware, though you have been too polite to mention it, that the last few editions have had rather a Rebel bias, both by way of front cover pictures and magazine content. Though I hope that you will agree with me that John Bowcott's fascinating insight into things Reliant and Lucas related, while from a Rebel owner, was of tremendous interest.

Compromise is the thing (oh how I used to loathe that word and indeed the need for it!) but it is a reality and we do our best!

This organisation is called the Kitten Register, because, as many of you will know, I started it back in late 1991, when Terry Scott was still running the Rebel Register. I had failed to persuade Terry to widen his field of interest and I had no wish to be in conflict with him. Indeed, I was very sad when, having been asked if I would like to take the Rebel Register over in 1992 or 3 (and of course said yes, naturally) he then passed it on to someone else. Alas, Eric has sadly failed to do anything with it (in fact his telephone number is discontinued and if anyone knows where he is now I would be pleased to learn). Eric was based in the Leatherhead area I believe.

We now enjoy almost 60 Rebels as you can see on the list, and this excludes ones which I know have been scrapped, which I must add on one day to ensure they are recorded.

How did I get onto this subject? Oh yes, I remember (what do you mean, that's a first??), the volume of Rebel related articles this year. Well, the Rebel people have sent in pictures and articles so why not? Come on you Kitten owners, if you have a story to tell let's be hearing it – pictures too! Whilst I am by no means out of these, some new ones would be most welcome. Why not spend a couple of hours over the holiday and provide us with your story?

I must just use a small space here to offer words of encouragement and apologies to our alternative spares list keepers for the various vehicles. I will get in touch with you directly guys, and pass on what I have here. I am told that Lotus 7 racks are probably identical to Kitten ones and while they are probably cheaper to Club Lotus members coming in at £145, that may be on an exchange basis. I can still have them reconditioned for £65 exchange (Nov '98), but there is a £25 surcharge on the old unit.

Right, that has neatly got me on to the subject of parts. The register still has some parts in stock. In particular there is a box on top of my wardrobe containing a number of brand new Rebel handbrake cables with grease nipples, feel free to order one! You can take one off my hands for just £19 delivered. The offer of a set of Kitten steering column bushes still stands at £7 the pair. Lower Kitten & Fox steering column links are still a problem. I am hopeful that the factory will find them before they have a new batch made, in either way they should become available again in the new year.

Just to record the information (trying to clear bits of paper off my desk at three in the morning again!) I should make a note of things like the Spitfire-engined Kitten story covered in Street Machine magazine – Paul Dodds was the chaps name I believe....

Also, perhaps I will be needing a new section in the magazine for our "Tempestuous" friends! I gather that Dave Price will be doing another after he has finished his, this time for Dave Smith. I also have a telephone number in a Tempest connection for Jack Williams but why I recorded that I really can't remember. I must ring him and find out what I have forgotten to do now!

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## **Brian's Diary**

(Instead of Rebel Round Up)

The September weekend of 1998 was to be a time of great progress on the Rebel front as far as my Rebels were concerned. The plan was hatched at a meeting early in September, when George Anderson, a Bond Bug owning member of the R.O.C. decided that I was in need of some direction.

Given that great progress had been made over the previous couple of months, culminating in my having actually given up one of my lock-ups, after several years of talking about doing so, not to let the proverbial weeds grow up in front of the remaining lock-up doors, it was suggested that since my trailer was now empty (for the first time in years!) and I could not make progress with the Rebel estate chassis because the R.O.C. club stand was stacked up all around it, that the obvious thing to do was put the stand on the trailer! This would enable it to be easily moved to R.O.C. events next year and allow progress to be made with the Rebel chassis! This all assumes, of course, that I will have a tow bar fitted to my Reliant for next year!

It was felt that with some minor modifications to the trailer, everything could be easily accommodated. The following day my telephone rang and four hours later a new plywood floor in the front half had reduced the number of different floor levels from three to two. It had even had a new plywood front, and was varnished! All of this made the nose weight heavier than ever, confirming, if confirmation was needed, the need for a jockey wheel – more work – more expense!

John Johnstone was then a great help in moving the stand and indeed the stakes, tent, associated poles, chain link together with the reinforced plastic sheets into the trailer which freed up the galvanised cabinet and gave access to the Rebel chassis.

Duly motivated, I felt that I had to finish the chassis painting, Phil Hallam had kindly painted most of it after doing the welding last year (yes, thank you Adrian Hanwell, I am finally getting round to using your spare Rebel Estate chassis!) so it only took an hour to complete the silver coat. A few days later the chassis received its first coat of chassis black. John J was again on hand on the Monday morning to remove the now surplus steel cabinet and to turn the chassis over so that the other side could receive its black coat.

Part of the progress of the Rebel plan (for which there id no budget this year) was to use the mechanical components from my saloon car which Michael Bentley had been good enough to give a home to for the last couple of years, so a plan was hatched to go to Yorkshire and retrieve it. Since the body would not be required, it was planned to remove it there and just bring back the running gear north of the border. Much debate ensued as to whether we should cut the body up, or carefully remove it and keep it in case it were needed in the future. Michael was quite happy to give it a long term home, but the labour involved in removing it intact was more complicated than cutting it up. Though cutting it up would take longer and be harder work, it could be done by one man whereas to lift the body complete would take four people, well perhaps three fit ones, but we did not look like having three fit ones available. This depended a lot on how many people made it to Yorkshire.

In an effort to keep as many options open as possible, and also to save lifting anything (the plan had been to take Alan's six by four trailer and lift the chassis on top of it) Mike Cowie (thank you Mike) kindly agreed to let me borrow his small trailer (usually used for transporting 3-wheeler Morgans!). It was needing a coat of paint, a trailer board and a jockey wheel but that was duly arranged – took three days though. (Just because of the slow pace that I can work at these days), but got done in time. John and I set off south on the Friday morning.

We called in on the way to see John and Jackie Box and to have a sit in the new 4 wheeler Ligier Ambra which Reliant will be marketing in the new year. It is a 2-seater twin cylinder diesel machine built on an aluminium space frame with plastic panels, automatic constantly variable transmission, very easy to drive and park and up to 100mpg. Can't wait to learn how much!

Over then by way of the Ribblehead viaduct to Leyburn for fish and chips. John got the Rebel ready for loading while I got the food in, and a quiet evening with Michael watching a film on his new DVD projection system – impressive stuff this modern technology!

Off then on the Saturday morning to head for home. By this time an idea for more progress had struck and I had rung ahead to ask Moira, my beloved, to try and arrange some additional help on the Saturday afternoon. A working party was duly arranged for Phil's place that afternoon, short notice I know, well done chaps. Alan brought the six by four trailer to Renfrew to meet us and load the now nicely black Rebel chassis and we headed off in convoy, trailered Rebel astern for Ayrshire. In three hours flat (well 2 hours 57 minutes) the saloon body was removed and packed in to 14 plastic bags, the back axle, front suspension and gearbox and propshaft fitted to the refurbished chassis and it was taken back to the lock-up in Renfrew looking very different from what it had done earlier.

Yes of course there were snags, like though I had remembered to bring along a pair of Rebel estate rear springs (they have more leaves than saloon ones) I had failed to remember that thicker springs need longer u bolts but the team improvised most effectively (must remember to find and fit the correct u bolts!).

Only twice did the angle grinder come into play and only once the hacksaw (other than cutting up the body). Alan and Kenny started at the front and Phil and John at the back and they met in the middle, where I did undo the handbrake lever bolts, in fact I also removed the boot lid restraining wire nuts as well so did help a little. Grant Coull, one of our youngest subscribers and Phil's son Glyn and his friend also mucked in and there were lots of pictures taken, in what, for this year, was a glorious Saturday afternoon and tremendous progress was made. It really is quite amazing what half a dozen people who know what they're doing can achieve in a short period of time.

The trailer was returned to Balfron (north of Glasgow) on Sunday morning, just in time for me to get home to watch the Grand Prix and see David Coulthard on the podium again, what a weekend!

The trouble is, as I said earlier, there is no budget for this project this year and that was an extra 600 miles that month, mostly towing, this really can't go on!

## ***Foxes' Den***

Dear Brian,

04-06/10/98

This time I remembered to change the date at the top of the letter.... I always make a duplicate of the previous one and delete the text as the easiest way of creating the letterhead... Is it more confusing to receive a wrongly dated letter than an undated one? I know you've pleaded for people to date their correspondence but you didn't specify a date you see!

At the recent Scimi-Club Norfolk camping weekend, my friend took a super photo of a line-up of deserted Scimitars with a little blue Fox at the end with six people crowded round it! I could never choose between the Scimi and the Fox if I had to lose one, the truck does have a certain character.

Said Fox is in receipt of a rebuilt engine courtesy of Steve (SJP Engines) down in Barking, who's done sterling work including a full balance with clutch and fitting. He came recommended by Bob Neal and I have no hesitation in passing on my recommendation of his services. For those within southern latitudes he is only a few minutes from the bottom of the A11 and you can get hold of him on 0181 598 8877 out of hours.

The balancing was mainly prompted by the fact that the original engine had only done 60,000 miles when stripped but the bearings didn't just have room for a train, tilting or not but probably the whole of Anglia

Railways and John Prescott too! There was precious little left of the shells in fact and the temporary replacement engine seemed to offer just as much vibration. Initial impressions in the running in period are that the balancing was very worthwhile resulting in a much quieter vehicle than with either of the other engines I've used, even when the vehicle was new. It has to be said though that after yesterday's return trip for the 500 mile service – 5 hours at motorway speeds – quietness is relative. I'd dearly love to know if anybody has discovered a major breakthrough in the sound deadening quest. I have long since put a roll of felt to good use, which made a big difference and am considering filling the hollow B 7 C post area with that solidifying aerosol foam as I'm sure the body shape acts as a trumpet forcing sound up from the rear wheels to the area just behind your ears. (Try leaning forward 6" at any speed over 50 and the sound "boom" decreases noticeably). I haven't yet devised a way of blocking the open bottom of the hollow area to encourage me to try it.

By the way, I must confess the fitting of an electric fan has not yet been done, which would make a difference so can anyone tell me which one I need to make the job easier. - Remember we are talking Foxes here folks – Scrappies around here won't let you mess around exploring possibilities – you need to know exactly what model you are after to gain admission!

Please put my name down for a pair of stainless steel window frames, cheque for deposit enclosed. I think that every Fox left on the road must require them as mine began to disintegrate a dozen years ago. They are the only weak point I have discovered in the whole design.

I have had fun too trying to obtain new rubber bushes / insulators for the steering rack. Which a front engine oil leak had softened to the point of allowing a lot of sideways play in the steering rack. Everyone I tried had the one I didn't need, then suddenly, Brian at Reliant Express found a store of them at the back of a shelf. (0151 531 7638) He runs a Fox as a parts delivery van.

Well, what a serious letter. It must be the time of year, or a surfeit of party political conferences, but all the best anyway. Three cheers for the increased frequency of the mag.

Thanks, Duncan Bradford, Norwich.

P.S. I see that I got the date wrong anyway!!!

## READERS LETTERS

Since it is a week or two since you read this I will include the whole story this time...

Dear Brian 29-07-98

Many thanks for your letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> July regarding the engine in my Kitten. Also many thanks for the back copies of the Mewsletter that arrived a couple of days later. Unfortunately I overdosed on them and am now suffering acute withdrawal symptoms so please send the next one as soon as possible to relieve my addiction!

To more serious matters (what's more serious than a Mewsletter?) *HIS comment not mine – Ed!* With regards to my engine *OK a bit of history here, Malcolm first wrote to me back in April, he was telling me that his Kitten had only 60,000 miles on the clock when he first acquired it, but it turned out not to be working (the odometer). He has since then repaired it and covered a further 55,000 miles, all on the same engine and he feels that it must soon be in need of an overhaul.* Although I am happy doing bodywork, spraying, interior trim and electrics I leave the mechanical repairs to my local family run Reliant garage who tell me that they have a personal friend who runs a small engine reconditioning business. Tony (my Reliant garage) reckons he can remove the engine, get his friend to recondition it, get it back in to the car and get the car back on the road within a week so as the Kitten is my sole transport this seems the best way forward, especially as I want to keep my original engine.

While I was talking to Tony the other day he mentioned that he has other Kittens on his books, so I will follow these up to see if they would be interested in joining the Register. Also at the same time he told me

that he gets a lot of his spares from a firm that used to deal just in Scimitars but when Reliant last went in to receivership, they launched out into the parts for smaller Reliants. I will try to find out more about them and let you know. *I suspect we are talking about Graham Walker here* – Ed Well Brian, that's all for now except to thank you once again for the great job you do with the Register. I will be in touch to keep you up to date with developments – all the best..

Malcolm Rush – Witchchurch.

Dear Brian                      August 1998

Thank you for the Mewsletter and membership info. I have owned a Reliant of one sort or another for the past 30 years but I knew nothing of the existence of any club until I heard about the R.O.C. in 1990! Enough of that, about my Kitten.... We wanted a Kitten for quite a few years but each time we went after one we'd either just missed it or "sorry mate it went within 10 minutes of the advert coming out". Then a friend found one rotting away in a compound near Redcar and asked if he could buy it. Got it home and decided that it would not be worth his time trying to restore it (it had been in the compound for 11 years). So, he 'phoned me and asked if I was still after a Kitten. I jumped at the chance and paid £70 without seeing the car. A week later the car was delivered to me. Under the bonnet was thick cob webs, under the cob webs was an engine block which had been stripped of everything that could be removed with the block in situ. This was replaced with the engine from my '82 Robin. Inside the car were more cob webs and dust and, like the engine bay it was well stripped. The seats were still in and though seized were not in bad condition (they had covers on luckily). The instrument panel was just holes where switches and clocks had been. Under the car the fuel tank had rotted away, as had the clutch and handbrake cables and the brake pipes. Under the crumbling underseal the chassis was quite sound. All brake parts had to be renewed as did the steering parts (track rod ends, top/bottom ball joints and rack gaiters). The front suspension is OK though the rear springs have gone soft (Peter Hayton is trying to get some back springs for me). Anyway, £800 and a lot of work later the Kitten is on the road but still needs one or two things. (rear springs mainly). It has also cost my 1976 Robin, from which I pinched switches, clocks, petrol tank, handbrake lever (pity the cable was different!) and the 750 engine which is now driving the 1982 Robin. Eventually I will take off anything else useful, chop it up and take it to the tip (the '76 Robin that is) – or was!

In your notes (page 12, July/August Mewsletter) there had been some difficulty obtaining Kitten rear brake retaining clips. After not having one of these things lined up properly, then giving it a hefty whack with a hammer and punch, I broke it. After some shopping around I found them available from Halfords – NOT the high street ones, where they seem only to cater for bicycles, car polish and sound systems but the superstores found on retail parks, which have a factors department and are quite helpful. Of course it is easier if you can take an old one along for comparison, but not if it is for a 1978 Mini, because, just like everywhere else, if you mention the R word the response is "No we don't stock anything like that, try your local dealer!"

Oh, by the way, the last line of the old Esso song was: "CALL at the Esso sign" – for Esso Extra or Golden or whatever they were promoting at the time!

Jeff Holmes – Saltburn by the Sea

Dear Brian                      30<sup>th</sup> August 1998

I enclose the registration form for my Kitten – the form might be out of date, as I've had it for a while. Although the car isn't MOT'd or taxed I am hoping to get these within the next year so I can drive it when I'm seventeen next summer. I don't think it needs that much work, though the steering rack seems rather worn and the back brake cylinders are seized. The previous owner gave me the car rather than scrapping it and has altered it quite a bit. He ripped out the door trim in order to fit speakers for his CB radio equipment but seems to have abandoned this plan and simply replaced the original door pockets and armrests with flat sheets of cardboard covered in imitation leather. He then screwed the speaker grilles on top to make it look as if there were expensive speakers fitted – but there weren't any! Remnants of his CB radio equipment abound throughout the car, such as an extra Arial mounting on the roof linked to a huge sheet of chicken wire inside the headlining and various wires hanging down from switches that do nothing. Gradually I am trying to

find out what everything did or does and take out anything which does nothing. The previous owner also fitted an alarm, which is good but is so sensitive that just the wind rocking the car can set it off. He replaced the black front seats with tan coloured ones from another Kitten and resprayed the car (which was originally turquoise as far as I can tell from chips of paint) Reliant Capricorn Blue, a deep shade which would be attractive if it were not flaking off in a number of places.

As the car is by no means in original condition, I soon abandoned any hopes of trying to make it concours. Instead I have made a few modifications of my own, mostly cosmetic, but which I hope will improve the car without too much expense. I sprayed the radiator grille matt black, to go with the headlight surround and put the latest black and silver Reliant "Phoenix" badge on the front instead of the original Tamworth Castle shield. The effect of this, along with painting the sills and below the bumper matt black as well, is to modernise the look to the extent where it could pass for a 1980's car. In fact from a distance it looks a bit like the Dolphin made in India with the black grille. Within the next few weeks I hope to get some 12" wheels from a scrap yard – those from an MG Metro look quite good. The only place I can drive the Kitten at the moment is around a field, which means 10mph maximum and your head hitting the roof over every bump. I hope that bigger wheels will improve this slightly as well as making the car look more modern.

The only other distinguishing features about my Kitten, although illegal, are the Isle of Man number plates which, with narrower letters, dashes between the parts of the registration and a red section with the Manx three legged emblem, make the Kitten look like a foreign car from a distance. The number, NJY 671S is correct, and the plates say GBM instead of GB so I don't think I'm doing anything too awful compared to some of the American cars you see with tiny little square plates. The Manx plates are only fixed on with Velcro and I always keep the proper plates in the car so I can always change them back. I did think of experimenting with diplomatic plates so I could park wherever I want but I thought that was going a bit too far!

According to the previous owner the car did over 200.000 miles on the original engine before he replaced it, and I have no idea how many the present unit has done. So I suppose there is an excuse for the car looking a bit tatty in places.

I am at the moment writing a book on Reliant and though I've only written up the TW9 Ant at the moment I have managed to collect copies of most road tests of the Kitten along with some copied brochures.

On the form you ask if anyone knows about any unusual Kittens or derivatives. During research for the book I've come across the Cipher, Sienna, Jimp, Liege, Tempest and Vantique but there hasn't been much written about them.

Best Wishes – Daniel Lockton – Dawlish

*Thank You very much Daniel. Daniel in fact gave me quite a lot of work to do, as most of the names and addresses he was good enough to supply me with were not known to me, so letters of introduction were duly sent out.*

Dear Brian                      September 1998

Having owned and run several Kittens over the past few years, I was both surprised and pleased to read in Practical Classics Club Guide about your existence! Could you therefore send me membership details and maybe an old club mag, or details of what you get up to! I would also be grateful for a list of any Kitten Estates that you know might be for sale.

I am not sure if you would welcome my present estate, due to its non-standard mods! I have fitted a screamer 1760 Ford x-flow engine on twin 40's and a 5-speed XR4i gearbox driving an Escort axle with lsd – suitably narrowed of course. The car runs on 14" Minilite wheels and the bodywork is all standard, even down to the original orange colour.

I hope this doesn't bar me from joining the club, as I also want to purchase another Estate to hopefully restore to as new condition.

Yours Faithfully – Les Young – Shiremoor.

*I am pretty pleased with myself for not interrupting Les's letter. Just after his comment about the standard bodywork I was tempted to but in and say – well that's all right then Les! But I'm sure we won't hold it against him!! – Right on with your letters....*

Dear Brian                      20<sup>th</sup> August 1998

Thanks for your letter and the "Mewsletter" in reply to my enquiry about joining the Register. As you can see from the enclosed cheque, I was impressed enough to want to join and have all the back issues.

As yet I have still not found a car to buy but have decided not to place a "wanted" ad in your newsletter until I have read through the back issues.

I have no idea what the other cars like Rebels or Foxes even look like and may decide on one of these as an alternative to the Kitten once I have read about them.

I work in the automotive department of Bath University and whilst clearing out a store room that obviously had not been emptied for some time I came across some old motoring magazines, one of which (Practical Motorist December 1975) had a road test on the Kitten from when it was first released, so I have included a copy and hope you will find it of some interest.

All the best – Gareth Bond – Bristol.

*There is always a lot of unsolicited mail arriving through our letter box relating to the Register, ranging from hotels offering "special rates" to companies offering the latest solution to the unleaded fuel situation. Most of these I consign directly to the recycling bin but I always wonder if I ought in fact to devote a page to giving you a summary of just what I elected to consign to the bin before doing so. The fact is, of course, that to devote a page to their whims and desires would deprive you of a page of whatever you would like to call the content of this specialist and somewhat unique publication.*

*You will have noticed in the Notes section in the past that I do give the odd one a mention and indeed, for a laugh, will do so in here this time. It is almost Christmas and they have tried to bribe us by promising the cost of mailing an edition of the magazine should anyone take up on their offer, and mention THE RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER when making the booking.....*

*The company in question is "American Motorhomes Direct" and I will simply, well it is simple for those who understand technology!, include their advert here.*

*Graham Cook is the man, he refers to me as "fellow car enthusiast" which must suggest he has an interest in cars!*

*Right, enough waffle, here it is.....*

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Tel: 01362 – 858544 SALES (CHRIS)

*Since we are soon to be in Christmas mood, the following really appealed to my sense of humour, so not for the first time, I shall digress for a moment from Reliants and let you feast your mind on this.....*

The Lanarkshire car club's magazine "Spin Off" recently printed the following article and I am indebted to Roger Martin of the A.M.O.C. (Aston Martin Owners' Club) for allowing me to use it here.

At a recent computer industry conference, Bill Gates of Microsoft, compared the computer industry with the automobile industry and stated "If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving twenty-five dollar cars which get 1000 miles to the gallon!"

This prompted GM to issue a press release stating that "If the automobile industry had developed its products like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics:-"

For no apparent reason the car would crash twice every day. Every time the lines on the road were re-painted you would have to buy a new car. Occasionally, for no apparent reason, your car engine would die as you drove along. You would just accept this, restart your car and continue with your journey, unless it was raining when you and your passengers would have to get out, then back in again.

Occasionally, for no apparent reason, executing a particular manoeuvre such as a left turn, would cause the car to shut down and refuse to restart. In this case you would need to re-install the engine. Only one person at a time would be able to use the car, unless you have bought "Car95 or CarNT", but then you would need to buy more seats.

Macintosh would make a car which was powered by the sun, was reliable, was 5 times faster and much easier to drive but would run on only 5% of the roads.

A single "General Protection" fault light would replace all instruments and warning lights. The airbag system would ask "are you sure?" before activating. Occasionally, for no apparent reason, the car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed the radio aerial.

GM would require all buyers to purchase a deluxe set of Rand McNally road maps even though they neither wanted nor needed them (Rand McNally is a subsidiary of GM!)

*I really love the "are you sure?" prompt for the airbag and having long been an admirer (though not user) of Apple Macintosh find the whole tale most amusing. I know that many of the digs will only be appreciated by computer buffs but I hope you appreciate the gist of it. Who was that first said that many a true word is spoken in jest?*

*Right, back to Reliants, or more to the point, my recording of them. As I hope you will see from the enclosed report, a compromise as always, but we do have less blank spaces than we did at one time. Thanks in no small way to Brian Millar's efforts I might say. Though still a way to go as regards some of the entries I know. To this end, will you please check that your own car(s) details are both present and correct and if not, please drop me a line with the missing, changed or incorrect details.*

*I am sometimes confused here (less of the cheek – what do you mean, that's normal Brian?!) Anyway, there are difficult issues even in a simple thing like trying to keep track of a few wee cars. For instance, does the membership number originally issued belong to the car, or the owner at the time? What do I record when a vehicle registration number changes? We have half a dozen or more vehicles which have had several registration numbers during their lives, indeed several since they were first recorded in the Register – how do I record that? Not a serious question, but one to which there are several solutions and I struggle to know which is the best. If for example, someone asks about a particular registration number and I only record one for each vehicle, then I may well not find a car which I know all about – if you see what I mean! Three of the vehicles on the Register have had at least three different numbers during their lives, several have had two. How is a simple lad like me to cope with this?*

*Enough of my worries, it is after all the season of goodwill. I will cope somehow and, lets be fair here, I am enjoying a lot of help these days from our various specialists (see inside front cover for details) and Brian Millar and John Pearce in particular, not to mention my long suffering wife Moira and brother Alan so it is not all my fault!!*

*We now have an odd number of pages but John Pearce tells me that he is prepared again to treat us to the extra colour page inside the rear cover, so I guess I'll give in and put an extra A4 sheet in this edition .I am intending an 8 page supplement anyway (well 4 double sided sheets at any rate).*

*Just checked the spelling (again) and the software tells me there are now 7728 words in this, the Christmas edition already, and it is not yet November – am I organised or what?*

*'Til next year then and please don't forget those subscriptions and the other side of the form as well. Just cross out everything that is appropriate, it confuses me no end if the First Aider form is left blank. I don't know if you can't help or if you simply did not see that side of the renewal notice. It IS double sided and I do need both sides completing please. I have simplified the form this year so please take the two minutes or less to read and complete – thank you.*

## **SALES AND WANTS**

For sale: Our man in Bedfordshire, Dave Smith has (Nov 98) a choice of two Kitten saloons for sale, both with long MOT's in good general condition

For sale: 1976 Kitten saloon, MOT Jan '99, purple but in need of respray. Taxed August, North East,

For sale: S registered Kitten Estate complete with a new galvanised chassis, built up except for fitting a new back brake adjuster, fuel filler, choke and throttle cables – Offers.

For sale: Tow bar (Dixon Bate?) £10, new unused clutch cable £5, refurbished set of door hinges with new door internal strengthening plates £5. Will post if required. All for a Kitten

### **August 1998**

For sale: R registered Kitten saloon, orange, MOT 'til May £450 contact John Hindle

For sale: Al Osborne of Thetford has an ex Ford Escort front seat in grey cloth with a head rest that fits a Kitten drivers side. It can be yours for £25 plus carriage. Al also still has copies of the 750 racing book at £18 delivered. Al was impressed with the take up of his information on tuning sheets, "The Cat's Whiskers" but surprised that no-one has asked for the more detailed follow-up sheets on any of the hints and tips covered. Talk to him if you want to know more.

### **September 1998**

Steve MacDonald has decided to sell his beloved Kitten Pick Up as seen on the front cover of edition 14. It has had more new parts than I have room to list here, from a new chassis up and is MOT'd and taxed. Give the man a ring if you are interested in this excellent vehicle

The Fiat 1600 twin cam powered Kitten is on the market, MOT May '99 give Jim Spence a ring if you are interested

For sale: One of a pair of Kittens, either a brown saloon or a turquoise Estate, both MOT'd & taxed. Please help the man choose which one to part with, contact Greg Savage

John Metcalfe has for sale Jimp number 68. 2 owners from new, just 28,000 miles, £600 spent by current owner, last MOT May '98 £750. Must be half its value for a quick sale.

## **October 1998**

For sale: Various 700 & 750cc Reliant engines, contact Paul Bennett from Grantham

For sale: 1967 Rebel saloon LKL 851F, chassis number 100331, runs but in need of respray & tlc. Yours for just £50.

For sale: Kitten saloon MOT Oct '99, recon engine 27,000 miles ago, excellent runner, many new parts over the years. Contact Jackie Ballam

For sale: 850cc Reliant engine, 10/10 crank, new rings & oil seals, glaze busted, valves ground in, yours for £200 contact Harry Darby

## **November 1998**

For sale: Reliant Kitten Estate, first registered Dec '77, MOT Aug 99, used daily. Engine rebuilt four years ago, new battery and clutch cable £400 contact Graham Annetts

For sale: In need of tlc, a 1976 Kitten saloon, brown with new tyres, runs but not on the road. Chassis number 6D6/14102775. Yours for £100. The car is in Essex, just call Mr Ross.

## **NOTES**

*Well, we finally seem to be getting into a standard format for the magazine these days, but you see how difficult it is to separate the general interest stories from the more technical ones from that fascinating article from John Bowcott, the Lucas / Rebel man the last time. John was good enough to provide me with first class detailed drawings of the Rebel front suspension mods he spoke of and if you would like to see them an sae together with an additional first class stamp (towards the copying costs), will secure you a copy. Then again I should send them to David Myers so that he can distribute them. Either way, you will be able to get a copy if you wish.*

*Kevin Leech is the man who currently owns Reliant (NOT a Reliant – the actual company!) Well he is the major shareholder at any rate. I had his name scribbled down on a piece of paper which we came across when Moira was giving me a hand tidying the desk today – 01/09/98 and she came up with the suggestion that if I told you then I would not have to remember!*

*Oh, lest I forget to mention it elsewhere, my thanks to Simon Dyall for the best attempt by far to date regarding a logo for the Register. (Will I actually get round to those certificates now I wonder!?) I know the text does not exactly roll off the tongue but it does fit the space available very well indeed and describes over 98% of our vehicles admirably. Apologies to those big boys among us, we won't hold your size against you – honest! It is my intention to include an A4 page with the logo printed a number of times for you or yours to suggest a colour scheme for the background – Marshall, remember for goodness sake to check with Stewart Halstead for approval!! Yes alright, Doug Jeffries approved it verbally early in November from a fax I sent down – must confirm this in writing.*

*Right, as I have probably said elsewhere, seasons greetings to you and yours. Please don't forget to use the renewal notice enclosed if you would like still more of this sort of thing to keep falling through your letterbox in the months ahead. I have bowed to hints this year and simplified the form so that you don't need your chassis numbers etc. this time but do please take the time (at your leisure) to check them against the enclosed copy of the Register and let me know if there are any mistakes or omissions .A small number of you may notice that I have altered your chassis numbers, for example, when a form has come to me with a Kitten chassis number beginning 684/14... I have changed it to 6B4/14... because the second number of a Kitten vin is alphabetic and I have assumed that the B*

*was mistaken for an 8. Given that the chassis plates were engraved by hand, they are not always easy to read and I assume the same went for the handwriting of whoever completed the forms to DVLA's computer .I know that some of the registration documents are wrong, unless of course it is me who is wrong believing that the second character is alphabetic (where there are only three characters before the /, where there are four, the third is alphabetic).*

*Oh by the way, Bob Neal still has copies of that Reliant video available for £8 delivered so if you want something different for Santa to give to a loved one, look no further!*

*One other bit of absolutely vital information which I may have shared with you before is the weights of our little cars. It is, for the record, Kitten saloon 503.81kg; estate 538.90kg; van 515kg. So now we all know!*

*Oh, Phil, Phil Hallam, are you there Phil? I really must get a picture of your Kitten for a future front cover, please nicely??*

**Brian**

More from Brian's large and ever expanding selection of possible cover photographs, including one from a series which the owner wanted returned – though I have scanned most of them in to my computer – watch this space! – John P.



The Kitten II, although it looks black is in fact a very dark green. Spotted and examined on Brian's way from Lands End to John O' Groats in May 1998. It has a leather interior and matching green carpets, not to mention the smart alloy wheels. Sadly there are no plans to put it into production at this time.

This picture shows a corner of Michael Bentley's garden not normally seen, which is why this wee Rebel saloon was kindly allowed to live there between 1996 and this September. This car is the subject of Brian's Diary, in this edition of the magazine. Thanks again Michael for giving it a home whilst its future was decided. I hope the garden is none the worse.



As you will be aware there are a number of ways of making a Kitten go faster. This is one of the more extreme techniques. John Beardmore, who kindly provided Brian with details of the conversion, has powered this one with a 3.5 litre Rover V8, which improves the acceleration and top speed (!) but does little for the fuel economy! John has, as you see, kept the body remarkably standard. More amazing pictures of this superbly engineered car in a future issue.



Thomas Touw (and the lovely Linda in the passenger seat, sorry about the picture quality Linda!) outside Brian's house in Renfrew during a brief visit in 1997. Thomas gets around even more than Brian used to! Hope to see you both again next year. For anyone interested there looks like being a run to Holland being organised. Please get in touch with Brian if you are interested.



# RELIANT PARTSWORLD

CANNOCK ROAD

CHASE TERRACE

BURNTWOOD

BN77 1NH

Tel :- 01543 459777

Fax :- 01543 459666

The Factory has moved over the 1998 Christmas break and they are now at the above address. They are happy to continue our arrangement for a 15% discount on parts bought from Partsworld for our Rebels, Kittens and Foxes.

Please remember to quote part numbers where possible, when ordering parts.

*I would like on behalf of the Kitten Register, to wish Stewart Halstead and his team every good fortune at their new factory.*

*Brian W. Marshall*